

A
SERMON

PREACHED

BEFORE

HIS MAIESTY

AT WOKIN, ON

Tuesday the xxviij.

of August. 1627.

K Leslie (H)

By *Henry Lesly*, one of His Ma-
iesties Chaplaines in
Ordinarie.



LONDON,
Printed by H.L. for IAMES BOLER. 1627.

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TO THE RIGHT
HONORABLE, PHILIP
Earle of *Montgomerie*, Baron of
Sherland, Lord Chamberlaine of His
Majesties Household, Knight of the
most noble Order of the Garter,
and of His Majesties most Hon:
Privie Councell.

Right Honourable:



Some doctrines are for the Court,
some for the Countrey, some for
one time, & some for another: but
regeneration being that which
concernes all, upon nolesse paine
than the hazzard of Gods king-
dome; is fit for all places and all times. And that
is the subject of this poore Sermon, which was
preached in my course of attendance upon his
Majestie; wherunto I was called by your honors au-
thoritie:

The Epistle Dedicatory.

thoritie: and the same being penned at your Lordships motion, now presents it selfe to your hand. Vouchsafe therefore, according to your accustomed goodnesse, to accept this small acknowledgement of my humble service. I know, nothing can proceede from my weakenesse worthy of the publike light, or the beames of your Honours judicious eyes: yet since it is not mine owne forwardnesse, but your Honours command that sendeth forth this Sermon; I doubt not but it shall finde, even for this cause, a free passage into the world, having received approbation from your Lordship, whom all good men doe honour as a noble Patrone of learning, and a zealous Friend of religion. The God of Heaven increase the measure of your Lordships graces, and crowne them with happinesse.

Your Honours in all

humble observance

HENRY LESLY.



I A M. I. 18.

Of his owne will begate hee us with the word of
truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits
of his creatures.



He Prerogative of a Christi-
an, is, to be the sonne of God:
for, as many as received him, to *Iob. 1. 12.*
them hee gave the prerogative
to become the sonnes of God.

Wee have not this preroga-
tive by our first birth; for so
we are the children of wrath, *Ephes. 2. 3.*

as saith the Apostle: the children of corruption, saith *Iob 17. 14.*
Iob: the children of the Devil, saith our Saviour. It is *Iob. 8. 44.*
by another birth that wee are made the sonnes of
God. This second birth is a mysterie to natural men:

Nicodemus, though a Master in *Israel*, was ignorant *Iob. 3. 10.*
of it; but the spirit, that searcheth all things, yea, the *1. cor. 2. 10.*
deepe things of God, as hee workes it by the word, so
he hath revealed it in the word, and most fully in
this place. Of his own will begate he us with the word
of truth, that wee should be as the first fruits of his
creatures.

Where consider 1. the benefite, Regeneration in the word *Begate*; 2. the author of it, in the particle *He*, *He begate*; 3. the motive, *his owne will*, *Of his owne will he begate*; 4. the subject in the particle *Us*, *Of his owne will begate he us*; 5. the instrument, *the word of Truth*, *Of his owne will begate hee us with the word of Truth*; 6. the end, *that we should be as the first fruits of his creatures*: *Of his owne will begate he us with the word of truth, that wee should be as the first fruits of his creatures.*

The benefite, Regeneration, is commonly taken as all one with Conversion, Renovation, Sanctification; which consists in mortification of sinne, and newnesse of life. By others more strictly, for our first incorporation & ingrafting into Christ, whereby wee have our spirituall being of children in the kingdome of grace, as by carnall generation wee have our naturall being in the kingdome of this world. But to speake properly, it is more large than either our incorporation into Christ, or the sanctification of our nature that followeth thereupon: for it comprehends the whole worke of our restoration by Christ, and whatsoever belongs eyther to the beginning or perfection of our spirituall being. It containes the seeds and habites of all graces; as sinne originall, whereto it is opposed, doth the seeds of all sinne: Therefore the Apostle having said before that *every good gift commeth downe from above*; he gives an instance here of Regeneration, *Of his owne will begate he us*. As if hee should reason after this maner: Regeneration is from above, therefore everie good gift is from thence: for Regeneration comprehends all other graces, not onely those na-
turall

turall graces of righteousness and holinesse, which we had in *Adam*, but the supernaturall grace also of faith it selfe.

This being meant by Regeneration, let us enquire into the reasons of the name. Why is our restauration called a generation or a begetting? The reasons are these: First, to shew the depravation of our Nature by sinne, to be so great, that we have even forfeited our sonne-ship. We are not onely become rebellious children, but no children at all: for a little correction will not serve to restore us unto our former estate; a verie new begetting and birth is required. Secondly, to shew that our conversion is wholly and soly the worke of God, and that wee ourselves can bring no helpe unto it, more than a childe can vnto his generation. For this cause is it also called a creation, & a resurrection from the dead, or a quickning. *Ephes. 2. 10. Eph. 2. 5. Eph. 5. 14.* Thirdly, because there is so great resemblance betwixt naturall generation, and our restauration by Christ. For here is a father begetting, even God the Father of lights: here is a mother bringing forth, the Church which is Gods spouse; for, *Ierusalem which Gal. 4. 26. is above, is the mother of us all*: here is a seed whereof we are begotten, even the *incorruptible seed of the Word. 1. Pet. 1. 23.* And as naturall generation doth produce a naturall life, so doth this spirituall generation produce a spirituall life. In naturall generation there are manie previous dispositions going before the induction of the forme: so is it here. God doth not regenerate us by sudden enthusiasmes, but first by the ministerie of his word, he workes in us many preparations, as so manie previous dispositions going before the act of our regeneration. In everie generation there

Eph. 4. 22. 24.

2. Pet. 1. 4.

Eph. 4. 13.

there is a great change; for a thing is brought *à non esse, ad esse*: one thing is destroyed that another may exist; according to the rule, *Generatio unius, corruptio alterius*: So here the old man dyeth that the new man may live and grow; for by regeneration wee cast off the old man, which is corrupt through deceiverable lusts, and put on that new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. This change in the generation of a Christian is so great, as of darkness into light, Eph. 5. 8. or of a stone into flesh, Ezek. 36. 26. Further, as in naturall generation the begetter begets in his owne likeness: so they that are begotten of God, are begotten in his likeness, and are therefore said to be partakers of the *divine nature*. And as in natural generatiō there is proceeding from little beginnings to greater perfectiō; so there is here. Wee are not made absolute entire Christians at the first dash, as Adam was a perfect man at the first; but first we are babes in Christ, and by degrees we grow from strength to strength, till we come unto the measure of the stature of the fulnesse of Christ. Finally, as the first birth is not without paine, so neyther the second. The infant that hath beene laid but nine moneths in the wombe of the mother, is not delivered without paine, suppose thee conceived it with pleasure: and shall we thinke to part with sinne, which in us was conceived with us, and which so often wee have nourished with pleasure, and not to prove the dolours of the second birth? No; there is the humbled soule, the wounded conscience, the contrite spirit, the broken heart, the mourning weede, the melting eye, the pale countenance, the voyce of lamentation; These are the dolours of the second birth. And

with these legall terrours and straits of conscience, the wicked are often killed, as many an infant in the wombe, before they be borne; that wee may say, as *Hezekiah* in another case, *The children are come to the birth, and there is no strength to bring forth* *Isa. 37. 3.* They have some conceptions, but they prove abortive; so that there is no generation. It is not so with us, of whom the Apostle speaketh: for the word used here ἀγεννησεν, imports as much as that hee brought us forth out of the womb. So that wee are not onely conceived, but also borne; and after all the dolours of the birth, wee enjoy the comforts of a blessed life: For the works of God are perfect, and Regeneration is Gods worke, as followeth, *He begate.*

The author of this benefite is *Hee*, namely, the Father of lights. Our regeneration in Scripture is ascribed to all the three persons. To the Father as the author of it, hee being the first in order and operation: *1. Pet. 1. 3. Blessed be God, and Father of our Lord Iesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us againe unto a lively hope &c.* To the Sonne; for he is called *our everlasting Father, Isa. 9. 6.* Hee is said to have children, *Isa. 8. 18.* and seed, *Isa. 53. 10.* And *Rev. 3. 14.* he is termed *the beginning of the creatures;* not so much in respect of the creation as of the recreation. It is ascribed unto him, not only because he is the author, but especially for that hee is the meritorious procurer of it, by his death appeasing the wrath of the Father, and so procuring to us the Spirit of life. Besides, he is the fountaine of this life unto us, and the roote out of which the new creature doth spring. The Church is said to be *of his flesh and of his bones,* *Eph. 5. 30.*

B. 3.

Ioh. 15. 4.

I. Cor. 15. 22. 45
Act. 3. 15.

Rom. 8. 2. 15. 1

bones, alluding unto *Adam* and *Eve*; for as *Eve* was taken out of *Adams* side, so the Church, and everie member thereof, sprang of the bloud that issued out of *Christs* side. Now that a man may spring out of *Christ*, he must first be transplanted, that is, taken out of the wilde Olive, the old *Adam*, and set and ingrafted into the second *Adam*, as a new stocke, that so he may receive life and juyce from him: For as the roote communicates life unto the branches, so doth *Christ* unto all his members. Therefore, saith hee, *as the branch cannot beare fruit of it selfe, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.* As *Adam* communicates naturall life to all that descend from him by naturall generation; so doth *Christ* spirituall life to all that descend from him by regeneration: Whence he is called the *second Adam*, a quickening Spirit, the Lord of life. This is that vertue of his resurrection magnified by the Apostle, *Phil. 3. 10.* whereby he raises us up to a spirituall life. But more specially is our regeneration ascribed to the holy Spirit; *Ioh. 3. 5.* *Except a man be borne of water and of the Spirit &c.* and *Tit. 3. 5.* *Hee saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the holy Ghost.* Thus is the holy Spirit called the Spirit of life, and the Spirit of adoption; because hee is the immediate worker of our new birth: for the Father and the Sonne doe all things by the Spirit. The Spirit is the bond of union to joyne us to *Christ*, the fountaine of this life; and the Spirit doth quicken the Word, which is the seed whereof we are begotten: there is a kinde of spirit in the materiall seed, which makes it prolificall; so is there a spirit in the incorruptible seed of the word, with-

witho ut which it were not effectuall for our generation; *for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.* 2 Cor. 3. 6. This holy Spirit working powerfully by the ministration of the Word, is the author of this birth.

And seeing regeneration is the worke of the Spirit, it is no marvell if there be great difference in the Schooles anent the manner of it: for the workes of the Spirit are secret, *his wayes are past finding out. The winde bloweth where it listeth* (saith our Saviour) *and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is borne of the Spirit.* Rom. 11. 33.
Job. 3. 8. Regeneration is that new name, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it, Rev. 2. 17. Away then with these thornie questions anent the manner of regeneration; as, whether it be by a physicall or morall act? whether the grace given be resistible by the will of man? Authoritie forbids such curious disputations not without cause: for seeing *no man knoweth the things of God, but the Spirit of God,* and he to whom the Spirit doth reveale them; we ought not to presse this point anie further than the Spirit hath revealed in the Word: which is so much as is sufficient for our instruction, if wee can be content to be wise according to sobrietie. For from the Word wee learne that God in our regeneration doth proceed after this manner; first, he prepareth the matter, after, he frameth the heart, and in the last place he formeth the outward members. This is the order in naturall generation; the matter is first prepared, then the heart framed, last of all the body furnished with outward members: So is it in regeneration, God first prepareth the matter, working in us by
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the ministerie of his word, a knowledge of his will, a sense of sinne, a feare of punishment, a desire of freedom, and some hope of mercie; which are *antecedentes*, preparations going before the act of our regeneration. Ye see it in those converts, *Act. 2. 37. When they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said—Men and brethren, what shall wee doe?* They were pricked in their hearts, therefore they had some knowledge of Gods will, a sense of sinne, and a feare of punishment: and they said, *what shall wee doe?* therefore they did thinke of their uprising; they had a desire of salvation, and some hope and inckling of pardon; else they would never have moved such a question. And all this was before the verie act of their conversion: for in the next words *Peter* prescribes repentance as a salve for their sore. This work of preparation doth sometimes appeare in the children of wrath, and is altogether choaked in them: for the Apostle tels us of some that fall away, *who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy Ghost.* Therefore in the elect God goeth further: having prepared the matter, he frameth the heart; for he infuseth into them his heavenly grace, illuminating the minde, changing the will, renewing the affections, and inducing all the faculties of the soule with new qualities. He giveth a spirituall being unto the soule, and as we say, *Principium formale ad actus spirituales exerendos.* He gives the power to beleeve: He gives power likewise for the work of love, and for everie good work; for faith, love, repentance, and all of them in Scripture be called the gifts of God. This second degree
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Heb. 6. 4.

Eph. 2. 8.
Rom. 9. 5.
2 Tim. 2. 25.

of our generation is well expressed in Scripture, by the pouring out of the spirit of grace, Zach. 12. 10. the shedding of the holy Ghost on us abundantly, 1 Pt. 3. 6. the giving of us a new heart, the putting a new spirit within us, the taking away of the stony heart, and giving us an heart of flesh, Ezek. 36. 26. It is also called a boring of the eare, Psal. 40. 6. an opening of the heart, Act. 16. 14. the circumcision of the heart, Deut. 10. 6. In the last place, after that God hath framed the heart, hee formeth the outward members, that is, hee workes by them and in them everie good thing. Hee doth not only give the power, but also he brings forth the act: for, as faith is called the gift of God, so is the verie act of faith to witte. Phil. 1. 29. Vnto you it is given -- to beleve on him. So in the covenant of Grace, after that God hath promised unto us a new heart (whereby our habituall conversion is signified) hee addeth further, *and I will cause you to walke in my Statutes.* So Ezek. 36. 27. that hee doth not onely give us power, but also hee brings forth the act, according to that of the Apostle, Phil. 2. 13. *It is God that worketh in you both to will and to doe.* This last is the accomplishment of our regeneration: for the act of Faith being brought forth, the outward members are formed, and so the New man is perfect in parts.

O let not this wonderfull worke of God passe without meditation: Seeing God is the Father begetting us, our soule must reflect upon him with a filial affection; for hereby hee doth intitle himselfe to two maine affections of the soule, Feare and Loue.

1. Feare or reverence. *A sonne reverenceth his Father, and a servant his Master: If then I bee a Father,* Mat. 23.
where

1. Joh. 3. 1.

where is my reverence? 2. He hath the like claime to our Love : for this worke of Regeneration is the greatest demonstration of the love of God to us. The Apostle *Iohn* points it forth with an *Ecce: Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sonnes of God.* The sense of this must needs inflame our hearts with love towards him againe.

But the height of his love will appeare by the cause moving God to beget us : which was nothing in us ; it was *his owne will: Of his owne will he begate.* This motive is added, to shew that the work of God begetting us is neyther necessarie, nor casuall, nor deserved. 1. Not necessarie, but voluntarie : So that the Apostle will put a difference betweene our generation, and the eternall generation of the Word, as is observed by *Athanasius*, and after him *Fulgentius*. For the generation of the Word is not an act of Gods will, but of his nature. The father begate his sonne, *non libera voluntate, sed natura necessitate*: but our generation is voluntary, *quia voluntas generati onem praecessit.* *Of his owne will hee begate.* 2. Neither is our generation casuall. God did not beget us by chance, or unawares and without premeditation ; but (as *Oecumenius* observeth) *destinata voluntate*, of a certaine purpose, and determined counsell. 3. This benefite is not deserved, but freely bestowed : for, *Of his owne will he begate.* This is the purpose of the Apostle, not so much to shew that God did not beget us out of anie naturall necessitie, nor yet by chance ; as to expresse the greatnesse of this benefite, by declaring the originall cause whereby God was moved to beget.

*Athanas. serm. 4.
cont. Arian.
Fulgent. lib. 3.
ad Monim. c. 8.*

get us. So that *his will* here is not opposed to necessity, nor to chance; but to mens merits, as in many other places: and it signifieth the good pleasure of God, freely calling us, who were unworthy, without respect to any thing in us, only because it was his will. It was not our will, nor our faith, nor our works foreseene, nor our outward dignitie, nor any thing else in us, that did move God to beget us. Not our will; for it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy, Rom. 9. 16. Besides, if we were renewed because it was our will and desire it should bee so; then there should bee some good in man before his conversion, and hee should have some thing whereof to rejoyce, contrarie to the Apostle, 1. Cor. 4. 7. Yea if God were moved by our will, then (as Prosper reasoneth well against the Semi-pelagians) *gratia Dei humanis voluntatibus subderetur*, Gods grace should depend upon mans will: and, as his Master S. Austin saith, *hoc esset primas partes homini, posteriores Deo dare*. Neyther was God moved with our faith to beget us; for no man hath faith before regeneration: therefore the Apostle saith of himselfe, that he obtained mercy of the Lord, not because he was faithfull, but, that hee might be faithfull. 1. Cor. 7. 25. The like he saith of all Gods people, Ephes. 1. 4. Hee hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, not because we were holy, but, that we should be holy. Neyther did the foresight of our workes move God to beget us: for good workes doe not precede, but follow regeneration. Besides, all our good workes are a debt of obedience due to God; and therefore cannot merite any thing. They are not our owne, but

Rom. II. 35.

Gods gifts, and the verie best of them are so stained with corruption, that when we have done all that we can, wee may account our selves unprofitable servants; *for who hath given unto him first, that he should be recompenced?* therefore the Apostle expressly secludeth them, *Rom. 9. 11. For the children being not yet borne, neyther having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand; not of workes, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her &c.* Finally, God was not moved by our outward dignitie, or anie other prerogative; *for they are not all Israel which are of Israel, neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children, Rom. 9. 6, 7.* God had never much respect unto the birth-right; as we may see in Cain and Abel, Ismael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob: in all which he left the elder and chose the younger. Moses expressly telleth the people, that God did not chuse them for any outward respect. *Deut. 7. 7, 8. The Lord did not chuse you because you were mo in number than anie people (for yee were the fewest of all people) but because the Lord loved you — hath he brought you out with a mighty hand.* It remaineth therefore that the onely cause is in God himselte, even his will.

The Scripture doth seriously inculcate this point, and that speaking of all the parts and degrees of our saluation. Of Election, *Rom. 9. 11. That the purpose of God according to election might stand; not of workes, but of him that calleth.* Of Vocation, *2. Tim. 1. 9. He hath called us with an holy calling; not according to our workes, but according to his owne purpose and grace.* Of Iustification, *Rom. 3. 24. Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Iesus.* Of salva-

Salvation, Ephes. 2. 8. 9. By grace are we saved through faith; and that not of our selves: it is the gift of God. And of Regeneration in this place: Of his owne will he begate. This motive in God is diversly expressed: for it is called his will here, and so is it Rom. 9. 18. He hath mercy on whom hee will. It is called his purpose, Rom. 9. 11. That the purpose of God according to election might stand. It is his delight, Psal. 18. 19. He delivered me, because he delighted in mee. It is his pleasure, Luke 12. 32. It is your Fathers pleasure to give you the kingdom. It is the good pleasure of his will, Ephes. 1. 5. Having predestinated us——according to the good pleasure of his will. It is the counsell of his owne will, Eph. 1. 11. He worketh all things after the counsell of his owne will. It is his grace, 2. Tim. 1. 9. Not according to our workes, but according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ. It is his mercy, Tit. 3. 5. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us. Yea, the riches of his mercy, Eph. 2. 4. God who is rich in mercy——even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us. And more, his abundant mercy, 1. Pet. 1. 3. Blessed be God, and Father---who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us againe. It is also called his love, Deut. 7. 8. Because the Lord loved you, he hath brought you out with a mighty hand. Yea, his great love, Ephes. 2. 4. But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love, wherewith he loved us. Finally, it is the manifestation of his glory on the vessels of mercie, Rom. 9. 28. And that he might make knowne the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy. This is the onely cause did move God; even his will, his purpose, his delight, his pleasure, the good pleasure

of his will, the counsell of his owne will, his grace, his mercie, the riches of his mercie, his abundant mercy, his love, his great love, the manifestation of the riches of his glorie on the vessels of mercie: And all these are one and the same, even so many diverse names of Gods will.

This must teach us to give glorie unto him who will not give his glory to another: the only cause of our election, vocation, justification, regeneration, is *his owne will*; therefore let us ascribe the whole praise of our salvation to him onely, and no part of it to our selves, saying with those Saints, *Apoc. 7. 10. Salvation belongeth to our God, which sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb.*

But all this while we are only in discourse of a benefite, of the author of it, and the cause moving. Now what of all this? The Apostle in the fourth place bringeth it home to us: *Of his owne will begate hee vs*, namely us that beleeve in his name. This *vs*, is the word of application; this girds it on, this fastens it to us, and maketh it ours. And because it is a matter of that necessitie to bee begotten of God, that without it, our Saviour saith, *none can see the kingdom of God*; it behoveth us to examine our selves, whether we be partakers of this benefite. And therefore yee shall doe well to take a brieve survey of the notes and markes of this new birth; which are these.

1. Faith in Christ. This note is assigned by the Apostle *Iohn, 1. Epist. 5. 1. whosoever beleeueth that Iesus is the Christ, is borne of God.* 2. Love to God, and to the brethren: for, *every one that loveth, is borne of God*, saith *Iohn, 1. Epist. 4. 7.* The Apostle *Peter* will have

have our regeneration tryed by this marke : 1. *Epist.*
 1. 22. 23. See that ye love one another, with a pure heart
 fervently, being borne againe, not of corruptible seed &c.
 As if he should say, If yee be borne againe, then will
 ye love one another. 3. Mortification of our sinfull
 lusts. This note is assigned by S. Iohn, 1. *Epist.* 2. 9.
whosoever is borne of God, doth not commit sinne: for
his seed remaineth in him, and hee cannot sinne, because
he is borne of God. He saith not, that he who is borne
 of God sinneth not; that were contrarie to what hee
 said before, chap. 1. 8. *If we say that we have no sinne, we*
deceive our selves: but he saith, that hee *doth not com-*
mit sinne, that is, he doth not follow sin as his trade;
 (for that is properly *notum a peccato.*) He sinneth not to-
 tally, with full purpose and resolution. nor finally;
 for though he fall, he recovereth himselfe againe by
 repentance, being kept by the power of God unto
 salvation. In a word, *Nam facit peccatum, quia patitur*
patius, saith Bernard. It is done rather on him, than of
 him: though he have sinne, sinne hath not him, and,
aliud est habere peccatum, aliud haberi a peccato. 4. A
 desire of spirituall food; for, if we be new borne babes,
 we will desire the sincere milke of the word; that we
 may grow thereby, 1. *Pet.* 2. 2.

The first note is a contempt of the world; for who-
 soever is borne of God, overcometh the world, 1. *Ioh.*
 5. 4. The second birth will make a man misregard his
 first birth, forget his fathers house, and despise the
 vanities of this world. *If yee bee risen with Christ, yee*
will seeke these things which are above. 6. Likenesse Col. 3. 1.
 to God. The begetter begets in his owne likenesse:
 That which is borne of the flesh, is flesh; and that which

Genes. 5. 3.

is borne of the spirit, is spirit, *Ioh. 3. 6.* It is said of Adam, that he begate a sonne in his owne likenesse, after his image; that is, not only a man like himselfe, but also corrupt and sinfull, as hee himselfe was. So likewise they that are begotten of God, are begotten in his likenesse; and therefore are said to be *partakers of the diuine nature*, *2. Pet. 1. 4.* For God stamps his owne nature, likenesse, and image upon his children: hee sealeth them with his owne spirit, and makes them holy as he is holy. 7. Spirituall life. Everie generation produceth life: naturall generation a naturall life; so this spiritual generation produceth a spiritual life, which is called *the life of God*, *Ephes. 4. 18.* and *the life of Iesus*, *2. Cor. 4. 10.* So that hee who is borne againe, can say with the blessed Apostle, *I live not, but Christ liueth in me.* And that ye may know this spirituall life; if it be in you, it will shew it selfe by sense, speech, and motion. Ye will have new senses: a spirituall sight; for the Lord will open your eyes to see the wonders of his law: a spirituall eare to heare the voyce of Christ: a spirituall smell, favouring the things of the spirit: a spirituall taste of Gods goodnesse, of the word of God, of the powers of the life to come: and a spirituall touch, feeling the secret working of Gods spirit in your own soules. Again, ye will have new tongues, speaking the language of Canaan, not the language of Ashdod. Finally, ye will have new motions, running the way of Gods commandements. *If we live in the spirit, we will also walke in the spirit*, *Gal. 5. 25.* without this walking in the spirit, there is no spirituall life. When I see an Image stand still without motion, I know for all the eyes,
and

Galat. 2. 20.

and mouth, and nose it hath; that it hath no life in it: so when I see professors of Religion without the powerfull practise of godlinesse, I know the life of God is not in them; they are meere Idols.

The last marke whereby we may try our regeneration, is our growth in grace: for as after naturall generation there followeth a naturall growth, the child that is begotten encreasing by degrees till it come to perfection; so after this spirituall generation there followeth a spirituall growth. The righteous by *Salomon* are compared to the *light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day*, *Pro. 4. 18.* Every branch that beareth fruit in Christ the true Vine, the Father who is the good Husbandman, *purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*, *Ioh. 15. 2.* In Christ all the body having nourishment ministred unto it, *encreaseth with the encrease of God*, *Col. 2. 19.* they grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord, *2. Pet. 3. 18.* they abound more and more, *1. Thess. 4. 1.* they are led forward to perfection, *Heb. 6. 1.* they grow up unto full holinesse in the feare of God, *2. Cor. 7. 1.* which is called a perfect man, and the measure of the stature of the fulnesse of Christ, *Eph. 4. 13.* So that he who is begotten of God will not stand at a stay, farre lesse will hee goe backward; but his whole life will bee a continuall progresse in godlinesse. Of holy hee will become more holy, and with the blessed Apostle, *forgetting those things which are behinde, and reaching forth unto those things which are before*, he will presse toward the mark, walking from strength to strength thorow this valley of teares, till he appeare before the face of God in Si-

Phil. 3. 13. 14.

on. These are the notes and signes of regeneration. Oh that we would descend into our owne soules by application, and try our new birth by our faith in Christ, our love to God & to the brethren, our mortification, our desire of heavenly food, our contempt of the world, our likenesse to God, our spirituall life, our growth in grace! that after tryall wee might be able to say confidently of our selves, as the Apostle here of the Saints, *Of his owne will begate he us*: Or if any did finde this benefite to bee eyther wanting or weake in him, that he might humble himselfe before God in the sense of this want, and earnestly seeke it in the use of the meanes, which is the Word, as followeth.

The instrument or meanes of our new birth, is the *Word of Truth*. *Of his owne will begate he us with the Word of Truth*. Some reade *verbo veritatis* in the Dative case, *To the Word*; expressing the end of our birth. As if he should say, Wee are begotten, not to fables, but to the word of truth, to celebrate and set forth the same both by our preaching and living. And some resolve it *According to the Word*; as if the Apostle had respect to the promises in the covenant of grace, made of this spirituall generation by Christ; which now being performed, God hath manifested the truth of his word. But the phrase being *λόγα ἀληθείας*, doth expresse the instrument wherewith we are begotten. He begate us in, or with the word. This word is taken diverse wayes: *Athanasius*, and after him *Oecumenius* and *Bernard*, understand it of the essentiall and uncreated word, the second person in the Trini-

Calestas.

Serm. 4. cont.
Arian.

Trinitie; for by him all things were made, and by him the elect are renewed. Some understand by the Word, Gods command and appointment; wherof it is said, *He spake the word, and they were made*: as if the Apostle here did speake of our first generation. Psal. 33. 6, 9. Others take it to be the Sacramentall word, which in Baptisme, the sacrament of regeneration, is that form prescribed by our Saviour, *I baptize thee in the name of the Father &c.* But more properly it is to be understood of the inspired word, or the doctrine of the Scripture: for that is the ordinarie meanes whereby we are begotten.

Thus the Spirit of God, that could worke of himselfe without meanes, is pleased in this great work to make choyce of a fit instrument to work by, even the word of God: which hath two main heads, the Law and the Gospell. The former is used by Gods spirit as a necessarie preparative; the other as a proper and essentiall instrument in this businesse: Therefore it is called; *The power of God to salvation, Rom. 1. 16. the word of faith, Rom. 10. 8. the word of life, Phil. 2. 16. the word of grace, Act. 20. 32. the Gospell of salvation, Eph. 1. 13. the incorruptible seed wherof we are borne anew, 1. Pet. 1. 23.* The same Apostle tels us, that by the *precious promises* we are made partakers of the divine nature, *2. Pet. 1. 4.* and to his Disciples our Saviour uttereth as much, saying, *Now are you cleane by the word that I have spoken, Ioh. 15. 3.* S. Paul plainly; *I have begotten you through the Gospell, 1. Cor. 4. 15.* and here our Apostle, *Of his own will begate he us with the word of Truth.* It is called the word of truth both here 2. Cor. 6. 7. and in many other places: 1. Because it is the word Ephes. 1. 13. Col. 1. 5.

of him who is not onely true, but also truth it selfe.
 2. Because a most true word. All other words are subject to errour, only this word is of infallible veritie, being grounded upon the authoritie of God the first truth. The word of the Serpent, whereby man conceived sinne, was deceitfull and false; but the word of God, whereby the new creature is conceived, is faithfull and true, yea, truth it selfe: *Ioh. 17. 17. Thy word is truth.* 3. Or it is the word of truth in opposition to the figures of the Law. The Law had a shadow of good things; the Gospell hath the substance of those shadows, the performance of the promises, the accomplishment of the prophecies: therefore is it said that *Grace and Truth came by Iesus Christ, Ioh. 1. 17.* 4. Or the word of truth, for the word of faith: for in Hebrew one word signifieth both truth and faith. 5. Or it may be so called, the word of truth, because it worketh truth, that is, righteousness in men. Finally, because it is the rule of all truth, which is according to godlinesse. The Apostle, *Gal. 6. 16.* calleth it a rule, *As many as walke according to this rule,* It is indeed the rule by which all controversies in Religion are to be determined: *Ad Verbum ad Testimonium*, is Gods own direction: *Isa. 8. 20. To the Law and to the Testimonie; if they speake not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.* This phrase doth sufficiently pleade for the authoritie and perfection of the Scripture, against the blasphemies of the Papists: Gods word is *the word of truth.*

And that ye may know how this word is the instrument of our new birth, two questions must be remembered: 1. That when the word is said to be the means

meanes of regeneration, wee doe not exclude the Sacrament of Baptisme. The Apostle joines both, *Eph. 5.26. That hee might sanctifie and cleanse it* (namely, the Church) *with the washing of water by the word.* Baptisme is called a *bath of regeneration*, *Tit. 3.5. S. Peter* doth advise men to receive Baptisme, perswading them that it availeth to the remission of sinnes, *Act. 2. 38.* and our Saviour saith, *a man is borne againe of water*, *Ioh. 3.5.* which places all the Ancients did understand of Baptisme. They did ordinarily call that Sacrament the mother of adoption: and I dare say, that not one of them ever said, that the Sacrament is only a signe of grace received; but all with one consent taught, that Baptisme doth conferre grace. so that all Infants baptized are truly regenerate. And how should we thinke otherwise? for it is a rule in Divinitie, that in the right use of a Sacrament the signe and the thing signified do alwayes go together: and in the baptisme of infants there is nothing on their part to hinder the right use. Not sinne originall; for they are baptized for the remission of that sinne: Not actual sinne; for they have not committed any: Not want of faith; for God requireth not actual faith from them, but mercifully supplyeth the want of it with the secret worke of his spirit, giving unto them that which of themselves they are not capable to receive. So that we must hold that God hath sanctified both the Word and the Sacrament for this purpose, to be the meanes of our new birth: & those whom God hath joyned together, let no man put asunder. 2. But lest any should thinke I ascribe too much to the meanes, wee must remember, that the

1. Cor. 3. 7.

Wisd. 16. 17. 1

Word, and so also the Sacrament, are not physicall but morall instruments of our regeneration. Not physicall instruments; for they doe not conferre grace *ex opere operato*: they have not in themselves anie vitall force and efficacie. The power to regenerate is not included in the Word preached, as vertue to heale in a medicine; for *neither is hee that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase*: therefore all are not regenerate that are partakers of the meanes. And they that receive this grace by the Word and Sacrament, receive it from God, & not from them: for of both is true the same, which *Salomons* Wisedome observeth of the brazen Serpent, *He that turned towards it, was not healed by the thing he saw, but by thee the Saviour of all*. *Non enim ista tribuunt quod per ista tribuitur*, saith *Hugo*. But the Word and Sacrament are morall instruments of our regeneration; for it pleaseth God to use them in this worke, and to joine the powerfull working of his spirit with these meanes: So that being rightly received, they give what they promise, and are what they signifie. and ordinarily God doth not regenerate anie, but onely in and by the Word and Sacrament. Hereby are we admonished highly to esteeme, and diligently to use these meanes. If the Word be the instrument of our new birth, then ought wee to heare this Word, to reade it, to meditate in the same day and night, to hide it in our hearts; that it may dwell in us plentifully; and withall to joine our earnest and heartie prayers to God, that hee would accompanie these outward means with the inward power & life of his spirit, that so it may be effectuell for our begetting.

And

And so at last I am come to the last circumstance in my Text, the end of our regeneration, *That we should be as the first fruits of his creatures.* Where the dignitie we are advanced unto by our new birth is declared: we are thereby made Gods creatures, and which is more, the first fruits of his creatures. First wee are made Gods creatures. What priviledge is this? are not all things his creatures? Yes; but whereas at first God created us to his owne image, wee have defaced this image in us by our fall, that God must create us anew, ere we can be his children; for so is our regeneration in Scripture often called a creation. and not without cause; 1. to shew the horrible corruption of our nature, that it must be turned up-side-downe, cast into a new mould, have a new creation, or else no good: a little mending will not serve, a new making is required. So God in the covenant of Grace, saith not, *I will transforme the stonie heart into a fleshly;* but, *I will take away the stonie heart, and give you an heart of flesh:* signifying thereby, that there is nothing in this corrupt nature, that hath affinity with the divine nature, wherof we are made partakers in our regeneration; but this old nature must be taken away, and a new nature given unto us. 2. To shew that we are meere patients in our conversion, and that of our selves wee can bring no helpe unto that worke; for man could not create himselfe: the creation had no preexistent matter, but God made all things of nothing. So we cannot convert ourselves; there is no matter in us, out of which the new creature is framed, not so much as a disposition to life, til it be breathed in us by the spirit of God. 3. In calling our re-

gene-

2. Cor. 5. 17.
Gal. 6. 15.
Ephes. 2. 10.
Eph. 4. 24.
Col. 3. 10.

generation a creation, the Scripture will expresse the powerfull working of God in the conversion of a sinner : for the creation was a worke of Gods power, so is our regeneration, not an act of Gods mercie onely, but of his power also. An indifferent motion or morall perswasion will not serve, a powerfull working is required. Hee must not onely call us, but also draw us : *No man can come to me* (saith our Saviour) *except the Father draw him*, *Ioh. 6.44.* this is his power that worketh in us, *Ephes. 3.20.* So he is said to worke faith with power, *2. Thess. 1.11.* It is called his divine power, *2. Pet. 1.3.* and the exceeding greatnesse of his power, and the working of his mightie power, *Eph. 1.19.* Yea, this power in the conversion of a sinner is so great, that it is equalled to that power wherby Christ was raised from the dead, *Col. 2.12.* In a word, Gods power is as much and perhaps more seene in the renovation, than in the first creation : for in the creation there was no hinderance, nor opposition ; but in the creation of the heart anew, there bee manie lets : For everie man by nature is an enemy to his owne salvation ; and therefore it must needs be a harder matter to make a good man of a bad, than to make a man of nothing. Our Saviour being working of some great miracle, tels his Disciples that they should doe greater workes than that ; meaning, they should save mens soules : and that is farre greater, than to save the bodie. The world is said to have beene made by Gods fingers, *Psal. 8.3.* *when I consider the heavens, the worke of thy fingers* : but the redemption of man, and conversion of a sinner, is said to bee wrought by the arme of God, as requiring more strength

strength: *He hath shewed strength with his arme, saith the blessed Virgin, Luke 1.51.* God created all things with his bare word; *Hee spake the word and they were made:* But the new creation cost him more, many a word, many a deed, many a teare; yea, the death of his onely begotten Sonne. In the first creation hee breathed life into the face of man: but in the second he breathed out his owne life to redeeme that man; as Bernard sweetly, *Qui semel & tantum dicendo fecit; in reficiendo & fecit multa, & gessit mira, & pertulit dura, nec tantum dura, sed & indigna.* Finally, our renovation is called a creation, to shew the extent of it. It is not a part that must be renewed, but the whole man: for it is a new creation; therefore whatsoever was created must bee renewed, even the *whole spirit, and soule, and body.* As to the soule, the Lord strickes *1 Thes. 5.23.* vp new lights in the minde, restores life to the heart, communicates holinesse to the will and affections; that whereas before the soule of man was an habitation for vncleane spirits, lying vnder the curse of Babel, the Iim and Ziim dwelling in it, the Ostriches lodging, the Satyres dauncing, the Dragons crying *Isay 13.21,22.* within her palaces; that is, defiled with all sort of vile and uncleane affections: the Lord Iesus hath sanctified it to bee an habitation for himselfe. As to the reparation of the bodie, it consists partly in making the members thereof weapons of righteousness in this life, and partly in deliuering them from mortalitie and corruption, in the day of the resurrection; called for that cause the day of regeneration by our Saviour. Thus are we made Gods creatures.

But this is not all: By our new birth wee are not

E

only

Exod. 13. 2.
C. 22. 29.
C. 14. 19.
Leuit. 27. 26.
Num. 3. 13.

Controbie 7.
Grian. c. 3.

only made Gods creatures, but which is more, the *first fruits of his creatures*. He borrowes a Metaphore from the ceremoniall Law; wherein the Lord required the first fruits of all the increase of the earth, besides the first borne of men and cattell, to be set apart for himselfe: and that, both that they might bee for the maintenance of the Priests, and likewise, thereby to declare that he was their God, they his debtors, as receiuing all things from him; as also to assure them, that the whole crop was sanctified vnto them, in as much as God the Author of holinesse, had vouchsafed to receiue a portion of it, for his owne service. Vnto these first fruits under the Law, allusion is often made in the new Testament. So we reade of the *first fruits of the spirit*, Rom. 8. 23. the *first fruits of the dead*, 1. Cor. 15. 20. and here the *first fruits of his creatures*. Which may bee applyed eyther to the Apostles, or to the first Christians in generall, or to all the called of God, till the end of the world. Some haue vnderstood it of the Apostles, as *Fulgentius*, and *Occumenius* following him, applyech it to the ministers of the Gospel. The Apostles were the first fruits both in order of time, and in excellencie. In order of time: for as the first fruits were first gathered, so were they first called, and others by their meanes. They were the beginning of the new creation; (as the vulgar Latine reades it, *¶ i sumus initium creature*) for that great worke of reformation of the world, which was a new creation, did proceed from them. As if hee should say, therefore hath he begotten vs by the word, that from us as the head, the doctrine of the Gospel might flow and distill into others: and as we are the first.

first in the renovation, so we might be the beginning and cause of the reformation of others. Againe, they were the first fruits in excellencie : for the first fruits by the Law was of the best and chiefeſt of the corne, wine, oyle, hony, and all the encrease of the earth; Num. 18. 12. nothing but the very best was to be consecrated vnto God. Hence the principall and chiefeſt things are called first fruits. The people were cōmanded to bring the first fruits of their gold and siluer for the work of the Tabernacle, that is, the best of their mettals. And in this sense it is said, *Psal. 89. 27. I will make him my first borne* : which is expounded in the next words, *higher than the kings of the earth*. So were the Apostles the best and chiefeſt of all Christians : as the Elephant is the chiefe of the beasts ; therefore called *the beginning of the wayes of God*, *Iob 40. v. 14*. Man chiefe of liuing creatures ; (for hee partaketh of the nature of euery creature, hauing sense common with beasts, reason with Angels; for which cause he is called the *Creature* *αὐτῆς ἐξουῶν*. *Mark 16. 15.*) and Christ is the chiefe of all creatures ; therefore called *the first borne of euery creature*, *Col. 1. 15*. So the Apostles were the chiefe amongst the Sons of God : they had a pre-eminence of grace, that by them others might bee brought vnto the faith.

And in both these respects, may this bee applyed vnto the first Christians in generall. They were gathered out of the world, before others were called ; they were the first that followed Christ in the regeneration ; in which sense *Epineus*, and the house of *Stephanas*, are called the first fruits of Achaia, *Rom. 16 5. 1. Cor. 16. 15*. Also they did far excell us, not only

in extraordinary gifts, as the gifts of prophetic, of working miracles, and speaking with tongues; but also in all manner of saving graces.

Finally, or this may be understood of all that shall be called of God till the end of the world: for we are not come to the waters of Bethesda, where the benefite was restrained to him that stepped first into the Poole; but we are come to the waters of Siloh, where the benefite is extended unto all, even to every one that thirsteth: according to that proclamation, *Isay 55. 1. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come unto the waters.* So that this prerogative belongeth unto all that are borne of God, they are *as the first fruits of his creatures*. It is not said, that we should be the first fruits: but, that *we should be as the first fruits, or a kind of first fruits*; for the particle *ὡς*, is a note of Similitude: And albeit we be not the first fruits of the new creatures yet we doe resemble the first fruits in many respects. 1. The first fruits were of the best and chiefest; so bee the children of God, they are by grace advanced above all creatures. So the Greekes expound *ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου, ὡς πρῶτος καὶ ὑψίστος*, *the first and most honourable*. *Oecumenius* followeth them, reading the words after this manner, *Vt simus primi & honoratissimi*. And some understand hereby our dominion over the creatures, which being lost in *Adam*, is restored to the regenerate. 2. As the first fruits were gathered before the rest, so are wee called before many of Gods elect people, some wherof are not yet born, some not converted: and both they and wee are the beginning of the creation of all things againe in glorie; for hereafter the creature it selfe also shall bee delivered.

vered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious
 libertie of the children of God, *Rom. 8. 21.* There shall
 be new heavens, and a new earth; and our renovation
 being compared with theirs, is as the first fruits in or- *Aquinas,*
 der of time. Besides, in the day of the great harvest,
 Gods reapers will first gather the wheat into Gods
 barne, & after bind up the tares: for *the dead in Christ*
shall rise first: as in this life, so also in that which is to *2 Thes. 4. 16.*
 come, Iudgement beginneth at Gods owne house.
 3. The first fruits were set apart for God, and hee did
 challenge them as his owne peculiar right. *It is mine,*
 saith the Lord, *Exod. 13. 2.* So though the earth bee
 the Lords, and the fulnesse thereof, yet hath he a pe-
 culiar right unto his new creatures: they are even set
 apart from the common masse of mankinde to bee a
Chosen generation, a royall Priesthood, an holy nation, a *1 Pet. 2. 9.*
peculiar people, unto the Lord their God. 4. The first
 borne of men and cattell were the speciall part of the
 first fruits, which God did challenge as his own, ha-
 ving delivered them from the hand of the destroying
 Angell, by the sprinkling of the blood of the pascall
 Lambe: the same right hath he to us, whom he hath
 delivered from the hand of the destroyer, by the
 blood of Christ *our Paschever, who is sacrificed for us.* *1 Cor. 5. 7.*
 5. The first borne did receive the inheritance: So is
 there *an inheritance immortall, undefiled, that fadeth*
not away, reserved for us in the heavens: for if wee bee *Rom. 8. 17.*
children, then heires, heires of God, and ioynt heires with
Christ. 6. The first fruits were offered up to God in a
 sacrifice. So the children of God do offer up their bo-
 dies a living sacrifice, *Rom. 12. 1.* The conversion of
 the Gentiles is called *an offering up,* *Rom. 15. 16.*

1 Cor. 15. 20.

7. The first fruits did sanctifie the rest : whereunto the Apostle alludeth, calling Christ *the first fruits of them that sleep* ; because by his resurrection he sanctifieth all beleevers to a blessed resurrection, as the first fruits under the Law did sanctifie the whole masse & heape. So is it with the godly : as God cursed the earth for the sinne of man, so he gives a blessing unto it for his children sake. 8. The first fruits were but a small portion in comparison of the whole crop. So it is but a small portion of the new creature that wee haue in this life : *we have received the first fruits of the Spirit*, saith the Apostle, *Rom. 8. 23.* that is, a small measure of the saving graces of the Spirit, as faith, hope, love, &c. but hereafter we shall enioy the full harvest : *In their Land they shall possesse the double, everlasting joy shall be unto them*, *Isay 61. 7.* 9. The first fruits was unto the people a pledge to assure them that they should enioy the whole crop in due season. So the beginnings of Gods graces in this life, give us an assured hope of enjoying the fulnesse of joy in the kingdome of Heaven ; *we also which have received the first fruits of the Spirit, doe waite for the adoption*, to wit, *the redemption of our bodie*, *Rom. 8. 23.* This is that lively hope whereunto we are begotten. *1. Pet. 1. 3.* *He hath begotten us unto a lively hope.* Finally, as the first fruits were accepted of God, notwithstanding the earth was accursed for the sinne of man, because they were not such things as were in their power to performe, but that which he had commanded the earth to yeeld them : So shall these meane graces that are in us bee accepted of God, though sometimes they savour of the naughtinesse of our nature, because they proceed from

from his speciall blessing, and are the workes of his spirit. Which may comfort us greatly in those assaults that the children of God fee in themselves, by reason of the corruptions and imperfections that cleave unto the best things they do.

How should this teach us to follow after holinesse: for this is the end of our new birth, that *we should bee as the first fruits of his creatures*: that is, that we should be better than other creatures. So Beda following S. Austin resolves this Text, *Vt simus ceteris creaturis meliores*. Jeremy saith of Gods people, *Israel was as a thing hallowed unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase: therefore all that devoure him shall offend*, Iere. 2. 3. that is, they were dedicate to God, and ought not to bee polluted. So are wee hallowed unto the Lord as the first fruits of his creatures: and therefore we ought not to pollute our selves with sinne and uncleannesse. Athanasius observeth, that seeing we are Gods first fruits, if we give any thing to prophane uses, all that is stolne from God. For, a common person to abuse Gods first fruits, was sacrilege: this was horribly punished even in the Priests sons, 1. Sam. 2. and will God suffer it in us? Every sin, though done by a Pagan, is a transgression of the Law; but the same committed by Christians, are not only sins, but sacrilegious finnes, and that in the highest degree. Then came the finnes of *Belsazar* to the height, when to all his former sins, hee ioyned the abuse of the holy vessels. To have drunk intemperately in any vessell, was a great sinne; but to doe it in the vessels dedicate to the honour of God, was a double sinne. Such is the sacrilege of them, who defile themselves,

Bed. in locum.
Aug. l. 2. de con-
sen. Evang. c. 33

Tract. de pas-
sione.

1 Cor. 15. 20.

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Bed. in locum.
Aug. l. 2. de con-
sen. Evang. c. 32

Tract. de passio-
ne.

Ephes. 4. 1.

2 Cor. 7. 1.

1 Thes. 5. 23.

selves, they being the Temples of God, and vessels dedicate to his service. Give mee leave therefore to exhort you in the words of the Apostle; *I beseech you that ye make worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called.* Now this is the end of our calling, that we should be holy as the first fruits. *Let us therefore cleanse our selves from all filthinesse of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holinesse in the feare of God. And the very God of peace sanctifie you wholly, that your whole spirit, and soule, and body, be preserved blamelesse unto the coming of our Lord Iesus.* To whom bee praise and glorie for ever.

Amen.



FINIS.

